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ABSTRACT

This study provides insight into selected factors which affect choice of teaching as a career as well as choice of a college. Sixty-one percent of the 142 high school students in the sample who marked teaching as their planned career indicated that scholarships were "very important" to career choice. Thirty-two percent indicated that it was "somewhat important," with seven percent indicating that scholarships were "not important" in career choice. Out of 137 students responding to a question regarding the importance of a loan to attract students into a particular career, 47 percent indicated that loans were "very important", 46 percent indicated that loans were "somewhat important," and only 6 percent indicated that loans were "not important." Financial aid, both scholarships and loans, are important to career choice for those preparing to enter teacher education programs. Further, the data support the reports emphasizing the importance of merit (no need) scholarships. (Author/JD)

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FINANCIAL AID ATTRACTS STUDENTS INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

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FINANCIAL AID ATTRACTS STUDENTS INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Recruitment of high-ability, high-achieving students into teacher education programs captured the attention of higher education institutions as a result, in part, of the public demand for excellence in education. In higher education, administrators and faculty are acknowledging that the quality of students recruited by and subsequently graduated from teacher education programs impacts significantly on the quality of students who enter all programs offered by a college or university. Some educators seek increased involvement in teacher education programs by faculty in other divisions, such as arts and sciences, business, agriculture, and home economics. Recognition of the need and acceptance of the responsibility by faculty and administrators in fields other than education for providing subject matter depth for prospective teachers is prerequisite to improving the quality of students entering all college programs.

Although a number of reasons have been advanced to explain why a small proportion of the academically talented students choose to enter teacher education programs, teaching does attract many who are academically proficient. A recent analysis of data indicates that Michigan State teacher candidates are very similar to non-teaching candidates in academic preparation and academic potential (Book, Freeman, Brousseau, 1985).

The problem, however, is how to attract large numbers of high-ability, high-achieving students into the field to meet the present and especially the future demand for teachers. About 900,000 (40%) of the current teaching force will have to be replaced in the next decade according to Rosenholtz and Smylie (1984). The magnitude of the problem illustrates the importance of determining the factors influencing students to attend college and enter teacher education programs.

The decline in the college-age population forces colleges to be more aggressive in recruiting students (Editorial Research Reports, 1986). In fact, all of the studies reviewed by Jensen (1983) agree that the availability of financial aid increases the likelihood that a student will attend college. Cost also influences which college a student will attend. The 1984 freshmen "no shows" to the four University of Missouri campuses were asked to list their reasons for enrolling in a school other than a University of Missouri campus. For each of the four campuses, cost was one of the two primary reasons listed (Office of Institutional Research, 1985).

While most scholarships have been awarded in the past on the basis of financial need, a new trend is gaining momentum. Educators today are designing more and more programs which reward academic excellence with no consideration of financial need (Cassidy and Alves, 1984; Leider and Schwab, 1985-86; Editorial Research Reports, 1986). Although the impact of cost is less significant to outstanding students than to other students, the desirability of reducing cost by increasing the amount of finanical aid, especially merit-based scholarships, is suggested by Leuthold (1985). From a sample of Midwest colleges, Freeman analyzed the effectiveness of "no need" scholarships on college choice. The results suggest that the "courtship" procedure used in awarding these scholarships may actually be more important than the amount of the awards (Freeman, 1984). Likewise, the size of the future monetary reward after college does not appear to increase significantly the enrollment probability (Schwartz, 1985).

Schwartz (1985) suggests, however, that the size of future monetary rewards might affect the choice of academic major. Some states have elected to influence choice of teaching as a career by providing financial aid to students not enrolled in teacher education programs. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst successfully recruited high-ability students into their teacher education program with the promise of paid internships in the public schools and in industry (Clark, Johnson, Kessler, and Schultz, 1984). One of the goals of the Missouri Excellence in Education Act of 1985 is to attract more academically talented students into

teacher education programs. Section 9 of the Act stipulates that the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will make one-year, $1,000 nonrenewable scholarships available to high school graduates who enter and make a commitment to pursue an approved teacher education program in an institution willing to match the $1,000 provided by the state. To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must have achieved a score at the 85th percentile or above on an accepted standardized test of academic ability or have a high school rank at or above the 85th percentile.

The study described below provides insight into selected factors which affect choice of a teaching career as well as choice of a college. Armed with this information, schools and colleges of education could plan more effective recruitment strategies.

Selection of Sample

Letters requesting participation in the study were sent to principals of selected high schools from randomly stratified school districts in Missouri. Three categories were created from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education classification of district size—small (1-999 students), medium (1,000-3,999 students), and large (over 4,000) students). The classification included 379 (69%) small, 129 (26%) medium, and 38 (5%) large districts in the state.

Using approximately 10% of the districts selected randomly from within each size classification, the following number of high schools within these districts were chosen as the sample: 35 (68%)

classified as small, 13 (25%) classified as medium, and 3 (6%) classified as large.

Principals choosing to ask their students to participate were sent survey instruments to be completed by students enrolled in junior and senior classes, such as English III or IV, with the exception of remedial and basic classes.

Method

A total of 1,155 usable questionnaires were received. From this sample, a subset was drawn of those students who responded affirmatively to the question, "Do you plan on a career as a teacher?" This subset contained 142 (12%) usable responses which form the basis for the analysis.

A descriptive analysis of the data was made involving cross tabulations of nominally scaled items. The chi-square statistical estimation test was used to determine significant differences.

Results

Students responding to a question regarding importance of financial aid in choice of a college totaled 138 of the 142 students who responded. Eighty-eight (64%) indicated that financial aid was "very important" in their choice of a college; 45 (32%) indicated it was "somewhat important;" 5 (3%) indicated that financial aid was "not important." This distribution was significantly different at the .01 level of confidence with a chi-square goodness of fit test value of 74.913 with 2 degrees of freedom.

To the question regarding the importance of scholarships to attract the students into a particular career, 138 of the 142 students responded. Eighty-four (61%) indicated that it was "very important"; 44 (32%) indicated it was "somewhat important." Only 10 (7%) indicated scholarships were "not important" in career choice. This distribution was significantly different at the .01 level of confidence with a chi-square goodness of fit test value of 59.652 with 2 degrees of, freedom.

Out of 137 students responding to a question regarding importance of a loan to attract the students into a particular career, 65 (47%) indicated that loans were "very important," 63 (46%) indicated that they were "somewhat important," 9 (6%) indicated that loans were "not important." This distribution was significantly different at the .01 level of confidence with a chi-square goodness of fit test value of 44.204 with 2 degrees of freedom.

Cross tabulations were calculated. The responses to the "importance of financial aid in choice of a college" were crossed with "importance of scholarship to attract students into a particular career." The cross tabulation, as shown in Table 1, indicates a significant difference in the distribution between these two items. Sixty-nine (51%) chose the "very important" category for both items. The chi-square value is 42.279 with two degrees of freedom which is significant at the .01 level of confidence.

TABLE 1

Importance of Financial Aid in Choice of a College Crossed with Importance of Scholarship to Attract Students Into a Particular Career

Financial Aid Importance in Choice of College	Scholarship Importance for Career Choice		
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Very Important	69	15	2
Somewhat Important	13	24	6
Not Important	0	3	2

Cross tabulation analysis was also made between the items regarding importance of financial aid in choice of a college and size of school district (small, medium and large). This distribution is presented in Table 2. It is not significantly different from a chance occurrence.

Conclusions and Implications

According to the analysis of the data collected in the study, financial aid is important to career choice for those preparing to enter teacher education programs. Therefore, institutions of higher education need to find resources to offer more scholarships and/or loans to attract students to their respective institutions. Finding

TABLE 2

Importance of Financial Aid in Choice of a College

Crossed with Size of School District

District Size	Financial Aid Importance in Choice of a College		
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Small	38	19	0
Medium	29	16	2
Large	21	10	3

additional resources may require reallocation of funds as well as creative fund-raising involving the private sector and alumni.

Further, analysis of the data supports the reports emphasizing the importance of merit (no-need) scholarships. Also, respondents in this study who are considering careers as teachers view scholarships as more important than loans (61% vs. 47%). These high school juniors and seniors report that financial aid (scholarships and loans) is very important to career choice which implies that educators need to accelerate their efforts to provide merit-based scholarships to attract students into teaching careers.

The students were drawn from across size of district to test the assumption that size of district, in population density, would tend to explain attitudinal differences concerning financial aid. Analysis of the data indicates there is no significant difference in

importance of financial aid in choosing a career regardless of size of district.

Additional study would be helpful to determine if the size of future monetary reward affects the choice of academic major even though it does not appear to increase significantly the probability of college enrollment.

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